



Title: Young People and Land in Zimbabwe: Livelihood Challenges After Land Reform

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Young people and land in Zimbabwe: Livelihood challenges after land reform

Ian Scoones, Blasio Mavedzenge and Felix Murimbarimba

Abstract

This article explores the livelihood challenges and opportunities of young people following Zimbabwe's land reform in 2000. The paper explores the life courses of a cohort of men and women, all children of land reform settlers, in two contrasting smallholder land reform sites. Major challenges to social reproduction are highlighted, reflected in an extended 'waithood', while some opportunities for accumulation are observed, notably in intensive agricultural production and agriculture-linked business enterprises. In conclusion, the implications of generational transfer of land, assets and livelihood opportunities are discussed in the context of Zimbabwe's agrarian reform.

Keywords: youth, waithood, employment, agriculture, land reform, Zimbabwe

Introduction

Zimbabwe's land reform in 2000 resulted in an unprecedented restructuring of the agrarian system, with a massive transfer of land to a mix of smallholder and medium-scale farmers¹. The next generation, the sons and daughters of the original beneficiaries, are now growing up. This paper explores the challenges faced by young people following land reform. Many policy debates identify 'youth' as either as potentially socially-disruptive threats or as entrepreneurial initiators of a new economy. The paper explores the reality on the ground in two sites in Zimbabwe. We ask, what is young people's connection to the land, and how are they benefiting, or not? What are the challenges of social reproduction and opportunities for accumulation of this post land reform generation? The objective of this paper is therefore to explore and identify how young people responded to the changes in agrarian structure following land reform and the precariousness that arose from a crisis economy that emerged in the nearly two decades since.

This paper explores these themes in two smallholder A1 (smallholder) resettlement sites in Zimbabwe – Hariana farm, Mvurwi, a high potential tobacco farming area to the north of the

capital Harare and Wondedzo area (Wares and Extension farms) in Masvingo district, further south, where dryland crop farming with some irrigated horticulture is important. In each these sites, long-term research has tracked what has happened to livelihoods of those who gained land following land reform, and investigated their livelihood activities, forms of accumulation and successes and failures (Scoones et al., 2010, 2018a,b; Scoones 2015, 2016). Nearly a generation on, the question now arises: what has happened to the children of these land reform beneficiaries?

This paper focuses on the cohort of children from our original sample aged between 20 and 31 in 2016, and so aged between four and 15 at land reform. Through a combination of survey data (N=183, across the two sites, representing all living children in this age group²), and a selection of in-depth biographies tracing life courses (N=31, representing a random sample of the full cohort), we examine how both men and women are engaging with land and agriculture, as well as other livelihood options, including migration. By contrasting the sites, we see differences influenced by agroecology, commitment to education, access to technology and by a range of social and cultural factors. All affect the transition to adulthood and the possibilities of social reproduction and accumulation by this generation. We focus in particular on the role of land, and how it is understood, accessed and controlled. Across genders and generations, the shifting meanings of land and rural life are traced, revealing the changing social dynamics of agrarian change. In conclusion, we reflect on Zimbabwe's land reform not just as a transfer of land assets, but as a more fundamental reconfiguration of social, cultural and economic relationships and opportunities across generations.

Zimbabwe's land reform: prospects for the next generation

There has been much discussion about 'youth', land and agriculture in Zimbabwe, as elsewhere across Africa. Definitions of 'youth' or 'young people' vary enormously. In Zimbabwe, the Constitution offers an age range from 15 to 35. But this stage in life is best looked at relationally, part often a difficult transition between childhood and adulthood, often with defining social, cultural and livelihood characteristics (e.g., Honwana 2012; White 2011; Jeffrey 2010; Cole and Durham 2008; Herrera 2006; Honwana and De Boeck 2005; Comaroff and Comaroff 2005; Jeffrey and McDowell 2004).

In African policy circles various narratives focusing on youth and agriculture compete for attention (Anyidoho et al. 2012; te Lintelo 2012). International and regional policy commentary³ reflects local media and policy discussion⁴, offering both positive and negative narratives about the role of youth. For some, youth are seen as a threat to stability: unemployed, footloose and prone to disruptive, political activism. As a result, young people may be cast as dangerous and in need of controlling. Often seen as uninterested in the ‘burdens’ of farming, they are sometimes castigated as not following their parents’ examples, abandoning rural culture and failing to feed the nation. Sometimes, land shortages are seen as a problem, with the young creating upheaval as land is demanded, unless alternative employment be found.

Contrasting narratives present young people in a more positive light. Educated, entrepreneurial and able to make use of new technologies, young people are seen as potentially at the forefront of new developments in agriculture and associated value chains. Working with new crops or in processing and marketing, they are seen as generating new commercial opportunities, putting farming, and rural agri-food systems more generally, more firmly on a business footing. Linking to off-farm work, the emphasis on young people as entrepreneurs, able to generate jobs in a neoliberal marketplace is often highlighted, as part of a positive, opportunity-oriented narrative.

However, these policy framings create a rather narrow debate, focused on individuals as entrepreneurs or the rather vague social category of ‘youth’, either as opportunity or threat. Such discussions fail to locate the analysis in a bigger picture of economic and demographic agrarian transition, and so understanding young people in context (Sumberg et al. 2012; White 2012). Here inter-generational shifts in land access, conflicts over interpretations of ‘tradition’, the role of patriarchal institutions, the influence of conflict and war, changing patterns of mobility and new forms of digital communication and economic exchange are all raised as important themes in critical studies of young people in rural Africa (e.g., Porter et al. 2017; Peters and Richards 2011; Honwana and de Boeck 2005; Peters 2004; Durham 2000) and more broadly (Ibrahim and Hutton 2014).

A particular feature of changing transitions to adulthood is the notion of ‘waithood’, explored extensively in the Middle East (Singerman 2011; Dhillon and Yousef 2009; McEvoy-Levy 2014; Honwana 2014) and India (Jeffrey 2010a), but identified more broadly, including

across Africa (Sommers 2012; Mains 2011). The notion of 'waithood' suggests that young people are increasingly finding it difficult to establish independent livelihoods, and are 'stuck', just 'passing time', often bored, frustrated and undervalued, with identities as 'drop-outs' and 'failures' undermining self-esteem. And a period of 'waithood' in turn challenges the conventional assumptions about the material base and temporal trajectories for independent social reproduction and accumulation (White 2011; Jeffrey 2010a).

Very often a negative discourse emerges, projecting visions of 'wasted lives' (Bauman 2004), with youth disengaged from the global economy due to the ravages of neoliberalism, aimlessly 'loitering' and 'waiting for the future' (Bayart 2007), just about surviving and always suffering (Chabal 2009). Yet these 'spatial and temporal anxieties', 'disruptions' and 'disjunctures' (Jeffrey 2010b: 466) also offer new possibilities for reconfigured cultural practices and economic opportunity, even if in precarious circumstances.

Challenges to 'hegemonic temporalities' of transition (Jeffrey 2010b: 468), where the assumption is that growing up is a linear transition from childhood to having a job, getting married, making a home, are increasingly common in the restructured sites of work and employment (Li and Ferguson 2018) of 'wageless life' (Denning 2007). In such settings, new skills and relationships are developed, requiring entrepreneurial improvisation to create a livelihood (Young et al. 2016). In such settings 'work' (rather than employment) is managed as part of everyday lives, reconfiguring social reproduction across sites, from home to field to work place to family and community (Bakker 2007).

As we discuss below, these themes of radically shifting experiences of young people, with profound implications for livelihoods, resonates strongly with the Zimbabwe situation. The process of transition to adulthood has changed significantly in Zimbabwe in the past few decades. In the past, as part of a classic southern African spatial and temporal pattern of circular migration (Potts 2010), a young man would leave home seeking work in the mines, on farms or in businesses in town. This would often occur after marriage following the establishment of an independent home. Male migrants would send remittances home to their wife/parents, and build up assets, notably cattle. They would visit home a few times a year, and leave the rest of their family at the rural home to farm. Later they would return home, following a period of stable employment, and retire and live from farming. Some women would follow the same route, joining their husbands with or without children at certain points, or engaging in migration independently; although patrilocal marriage arrangements,

and a highly gendered labour economy would restrict options, and women would move on marriage to their husband's home, often remaining in the rural communal area, committing to farming (Gaidzanwa 1995).

Today, things are very different. Patterns of migration have changed, both in terms of destination and who goes where. Men and women migrate, but often only to temporary, more fragile employment, with just a few gaining access to stable jobs, often abroad. This is highly dependent on education, and so the resources of parents, with family origins having a big impact on social mobility. Otherwise, the local economy, at least since the late-1990s, has been highly precarious, offering only short-term, informal work. The so-called *kukiya kiya* economy (Jones 2010) involves trading, panning, vending, and overall dealing and hustling (Chagonda 2016). This is the new form of jobless work of the informal economy (cf. Li and Ferguson 2018; Ferguson 2015; Denning 2007), with multiple, fractured classes of labour (Bernstein 2006). Such work is for survival: it generates vulnerability and precarity, and so often little opportunity for accumulation. The hybrid, informal economy is important for young people, but should not be romanticised (Dolan and Rajak 2016; Meagher 2012). In the last 20 years in Zimbabwe, and particularly recently when the formal economy has suffered recurrent crisis, such informal work is an important dominant alternative to farming and land-based livelihoods.

Those who gained land during the land reform from 2000, particularly in the smallholder A1 schemes, have benefited significantly, as 'accumulation from below' for many has resulted in improved livelihoods and cycles of farm-based investment (Moyo et al. 2009; Scoones et al. 2010). This has benefited others, including new workers employed by the new farm owners, while displacing others (Chambati 2011; Scoones et al. 2018b); relatives who have come to live in the new farms (Scoones et al. 2010) and some women who have gained land in their own right, although representing only around 15 percent of new land owners (Chiweshe et al. 2015; Matondi 2012; Mutopo 2011). This paper asks: what about the next generation who were too young to receive land during the land reform period?

What are the children of land reform beneficiaries doing now?

As Table 1 shows, slightly over half of the cohort aged between 20 and 31 in 2016 are living at home, mostly with parents, although some have independent homes. Others are living

elsewhere in Zimbabwe. Most women in this category are married, and living with their husbands; most men are in towns trying to find jobs in the informal economy, often working for a few months, coming home, then returning. There are very few in stable employment or training in Zimbabwe. From Wondedzo some have left the country, mostly to South Africa⁵, where they are working; again in often temporary jobs on farms or in towns. Unlike in the past, this involves both men and women. By contrast, migration outside Zimbabwe from Mvurwi is minimal, and limited to men⁶.

Table 1: Location of sons and daughters of land reform beneficiaries aged 21-30 in 2016

	Mvurwi		Wondedzo		Overall
	Women (N=31)	Men (N=30)	Women (N=57)	Men (N=65)	Women/men (N= 183)
At home	68%	80%	53%	46%	57%
Elsewhere in Zimbabwe	32%	17%	33%	34%	31%
Overseas	0%	3%	14%	20%	12%

In answer to the question of what individuals were doing now, the primary activities are listed in Table 2 below. Many identify themselves as being ‘at home’, and helping parents or farming on their own. Very few are employed ‘in a job’ in Zimbabwe or abroad. For women, the most common job is domestic work, while for men it is more varied; but in our sample mostly low paid, manual jobs (including being a security guard, driver, mechanic etc.). More are ‘self-employed’, often important as a secondary activity to farming or ‘hanging around’ at home. This is characterised as informal, temporary, low paid and insufficient to sustain a livelihood. Some will leave home to do this, but many try their luck at a range of activities in the area, ranging from piecework labouring, to building, carpentry and welding, to gold panning to vending and trading. Such work is reliant on earning money from the established land reform farmers from the previous generation who have land, and cash from agricultural production to buy services, build homes and hire labour.

Table 2: What are the next generation doing (main activity)?

	Mvurwi		Wondedzo		Overall
Activity	Women	Men	Women	Men	
At home, unemployed, helping parents	68%	50%	35%	32%	42%
Employed in a formal job	13%	10%	7%	15%	11%
Employed overseas in a job	0%	0%	9%	14%	8%
Self-employed, piece work	7%	30%	4%	18%	14%
Farming independently	7%	3%	33%	17%	18%
In education	7%	7%	12%	3%	7%

We also asked those in our sample what was the main challenge they faced. Answers to an open-ended question were then categorised into six challenges (Table 3).

Table 3: What is the main challenge being faced?

	Mvurwi		Wondedzo		Overall
Challenge	Women	Men	Women	Men	
Lack of jobs	16%	23%	23%	43%	29%
Cash/finance for inputs, etc.	52%	43%	14%	18%	27%
Family tensions/disputes, illness	19%	10%	14%	14%	14%
Education quality/failure	6%	7%	26%	11%	14%
Land/water access	3%	13%	9%	9%	9%

The lack of jobs and finance is the dominant theme, especially for men. The absence of any job or other source of finance restricts access to inputs for agriculture or other businesses, and so is linked to the second highest identified challenge, focused on financing and inputs. Educational access and quality and failure in exams was repeatedly mentioned, particularly by women (19%), as passing ‘O-levels’ was seen as a route to a better life. Despite many emphasising the importance of farming as a source of livelihood (and particularly irrigated agriculture), it was perhaps surprising that land and water access was highlighted as the primary challenge by only 9%. Some, however, highlighted a linked challenge - drought and

climate change, and the consequences for household food security (7%). As people move between work and home, often failing to get a job that sustains them for long, or in the period when young people are retaking school subjects, stresses at home take their toll. Marrying into homes where the husband does not have a separate residence can also result in tensions and conflicts, as reported by many women. Combined with other illnesses, deaths and other personal issues, these less tangible, but nevertheless very real emotional experiences and health issues were identified as the major challenge by 14% overall.

How, then, do different activities interact and combine over time during a young person's life course? In the next section, we explore this through a selection of cases studies.

Diverse life courses: difficult choices for young people

To get a sense of how livelihoods are composed, we must look over time, and get a picture of emerging life courses (cf. Locke and te Lintelo 2012). Across the 31 detailed life history interviews we undertook there is huge range of experience. From our qualitative analysis across the life history interviews, we drew out five major themes: mobility, precarious employment, off-farm work and remittances, the importance of education, waiting at home and engaging in projects and access to land through marriage. Below we illustrate these themes with excerpts from interviews from both Mvurwi and Wondedzo.

Mobile lives

The experience of navigating the informal economy away from home involves a lot of movement for young people. A young man from Wondedzo recounted his story:

‘I was born in 1985 in Charumbira communal lands before we moved into Wares farm in 2002. I failed to get all the needed ‘O-levels’, so I left home for Harare to look for a job. Sometimes I got a job just for a short time – welding, construction and so on - but most of the time I was not employed, just staying with relatives. Today I have no fixed job, and I am always looking. Jobs are so scarce. Life after school is so painful if you are in a big city like Harare where industries are not functioning. I always think of getting back to school, but there is a challenge of school fees. I am thinking of coming home to till the land, but without irrigation I am not interested in farming.’

The experience is similar for women, as one informant from Mvurwi explained:

‘After my father died in 2010, when I was in Form 1, life became tough. My mother had to sell cattle for paying school fees, and still I didn’t manage to pass my ‘O-levels’. I then married and moved to my husband’s home near here. But we argued a lot, and I returned home after a year and a half. I had to find employment, and luckily I got a job as a domestic worker. I then returned home, but later took another job as a shopkeeper in Guruve. It did not last long as the owner harassed me. I got home and had to look after my mother who was not well. We decided to open a small shop, and sold an animal to raise funds. I became the shopkeeper. I am dating a guy and we are planning to marry. Now my mother has given us a piece of land, and we can irrigate some tobacco and onions.’

As these and other cases show, there is much moving back and forth from rural homes to places of work, often with very short-term contracts, coming back to help parents on farms in between. People move between trading, migrating for farm work (sometimes to South Africa), small-scale mining, short-term jobs in urban areas and so on. This requires ingenuity, persistence and hard work. Women are heavily involved in cross-border trading, particularly from Wondedzo, and this can mean many weeks camping out, and on the road. The transition following school has not been easy. Temporary opportunities in spatially dispersed locations characterise young people’s experiences, radically disrupting the linear, predictable patterns of the past.

Precarious employment

Mobile lives and precarious employment in the informal *kukiya-kiya* economy are harsh, sometimes dangerous, and never offering much more than survival incomes. This is very far from the old migrant labour economy of the past. Zimbabwe’s economy has gone through recurrent crises over the full lifetimes of our cohort, involving the collapse of the formal economy, mass retrenchments from both private and public sectors and periods of hyperinflation. Without stability and ‘proper’ jobs, this is stressful, risky and challenging. While many improvise and cope, others note the impacts on mental health, self-respect and dignity, with resulting in drug and alcohol abuse for some. A male informant from Wondedzo explained his situation:

‘I was born at Mushagashe in 1989, and did primary school here. In 2004, I slipped out of the country to South Africa as an illegal immigrant. I had no documents. I evaded the police and border control as I went through the notorious Limpopo river. We were five, and fortunately we all survived the jaws of the crocodiles in the river. I stayed in South Africa for six months, and did piece work on the farms. Hunger was a menace as I survived on handouts from fellow Zimbabweans who were employed. I then decided to go back to Zimbabwe and I helped my parents for two years doing all the farming activities. Thereafter I again tried my luck to find a job. I went to Chiadzwa diamond mine in Manicaland and later Shurugwi to do gold panning. I also worked in Nema mine near Bulawayo. This involved processing mine dumps, but there were disputes and the place was closed down. In many ways, life was rosy as I could manage to buy what I wanted. However, I encountered a lot of fighting with fellow gold panners. The police troubled us, always locking us up. I was later engaged in some vices that were against my religion like beer drinking’.

The precarious livelihoods and risky lifestyles of life on the move, seeking out opportunities for survival convinced many, as this informant, to return ‘home’, and try their luck at farming, making use of their parents’ fields or acquiring small irrigated plots informally.

The importance of education

Education is seen as key to leaving home and getting more secure employment. In many respects this echoes the post Independence trajectory of those in the previous generation when education was a route to a job. In our sample, 73% of women and 83% of men had continued to Form 4 (secondary school). Many do multiple re-takes of ‘O-levels’ in the (usually vain) hope of a result that will secure them a job, and 13% of women and 4% of men identified education as their current primary activity across the sample. A focus on education was more evident in Wondedzo, where mission education and long-term patterns of migration, including abroad, have influenced views. By contrast, in the tobacco growing area of Mvurwi, men in particular can pick up work on the tobacco farms, or may engage in small-scale tobacco production without the expectation of a salaried job. In Mvurwi, early marriage is common for women, seen as route to a securing a livelihood and access to land from a

husband's family. The commitment to education is costly, however, as illustrated in the testimony of a young woman from Wondendzo:

‘I was born in 1995 at Morgenster Mission Hospital, when my parents were staying in near Nemanwa Growth Point. My father had been allocated a piece of land in Wondedzo Extension. I had to restart Grade 1 all the way to Grade 7 at Wondedzo primary school. Later, I did up to Form 4, but I did not pass first time. This year I am again attempting more subjects. My wish is to enrol at a teachers' training college. Meanwhile I assist my parents on the farm. I never thought that when one is at school life is so rosy. Staying at home while others are at work or school is so boring. You become loaded with all the house chores, but getting a job is very difficult when you do not have qualifications.’

Waiting at home, engaging in projects

As already noted, the theme of waiting, being in limbo, hoping for something better is a recurrent theme in many of the interviews. But, while the frustrations and anxieties are real, this is not a desperate, hopeless situation. Entrepreneurial activity is common as people seek out ‘piece work’ and create ‘projects’, and generate improvised livelihood opportunities, despite the challenges. For example, a young woman from Wondedzo described her situation thus:

‘I was born in Zaka district in 1989. My parents got land here in 2000, and I was enrolled at Wondedzo to finish my primary and complete my secondary education to Form 4. In 2014, I came out with only three ‘O-levels’. Now I am helping my parents to till the land and do some household chores. I also do part-time jobs like moulding cement bricks with one of my neighbours. Life after school is tough. After leaving school my parents are no longer paying attention to my needs as they are looking for those children behind me. They are also saying that I should work for my supplementary subject fees, so I have to run around looking for piece work.’

In order to survive, those in this period of ‘waithood’ engage in informal employment and sometimes develop small entrepreneurial projects. Getting some money, even from very short-term employment, may be a starting point for a larger project. Our life history case

studies show a huge array of examples of such projects, including running a shop, doing local hairdressing, running a grinding mill, starting a broiler project, brick moulding and selling, vending of everything from clothes to mobile phone cards to vegetables. A young man, also from Wondedzo, explained his experiences:

‘I was born in 1991 and grew up in Masvingo town where I stayed with grandmother as my mother had passed away. My father had acquired land in Wondedzo in 2000, so I opted to leave urban life for farming. In 2003 my father sadly passed away. I am one of seven boys in a polygamous marriage, and conflicts started to develop amongst us over the inheritance of the land and cattle. I did broiler keeping with my brother, but it didn't work out. We had a few hundred birds, but the project failed. I am committed to farming at this place, and want to start more projects. I wish to drill a borehole at the plot, ensuring crop production all year round. I also want to be the biggest poultry producer in the province. But I need cash from work, and need to be allocated my own piece of land.’

Married couples may combine options, with remittance income supporting on and off-farm activities:

‘I am a farmer as well as business woman running a shop at Wondedzo Business Centre. Together with my husband, who is working in South Africa, we managed to invest and build our own shop. I am the manager and the operator of the shop, and I go there to supply the shop. My husband's mother is sick, and we cultivate the land together. Dryland farming though is failing to pay back investments. In the future I want to be a large-scale commercial farmer if I could get a bigger piece of land. I also want to drill a borehole for irrigation at the farm.’

With limited options off-farm, access to land (and water) is central, as many of our cases show. Given the precarity of work and the lack of returns to education, land-based livelihoods are seen as crucial. Spreading activities across occasional piecework and projects, usually involving irrigated agriculture, is common, both for young men and women. In Wondedzo, dryland maize growing is combined with a more secure focus on small-scale horticulture, while in Mvurwi, tobacco, even on very small plots, is seen as a route to raising cash income. Access to land is gained via a number of routes. Most rely on land allocated by parents/in-

laws, while some use land illegally along riverbanks and by dams. Gaining access to land and starting agriculture production, notably small-scale irrigation, was a repeated aspiration across our informants, both men and women.

Marrying into a resettlement household

For women, one route to gaining access to land is through marriage. Overall, 61% of women and 54% men in the cohort are married. Women tend to get married earlier (average age 18.7 years, compared to men at 23.4 years in Wondedzo)⁷. Men delay marriage in order to try to find jobs to establish themselves, and only later come home. However, in our sample, only 29% are both married and farming independently with an established home. This proportion is highest in Mvurwi and lowest among men in Wondedzo (15%). Compared to earlier generations this is a relatively low proportion, showing how many are struggling to become independent, existing in an intermediate state between dependent childhood and independent adulthood.

A number of female informants explained how life had improved once they had gained land through a new husband's parents. A young woman from Wondedzo explained her story, typical of many others:

‘I was born in Zaka district in 1996. I am the first born in family of two girls. I grew up under the care of different relatives, as my parents passed away in 2001 and 2002. I had mostly been staying with my grandmother. I used to assist her in farming and all other household chores. I also did manual work in the neighbourhood in order to feed my grandmother and myself. I never enjoyed my life then; it was hard. In 2012 I got married here in Wares farm when I was only just 17. We are staying with my husband's mother. In 2015, we got a portion of my in-laws' field, about 1.5 ha. Here there are better crop yields compared to Zaka. I also am involved in a women's coop garden project. I am a mother of one boy. My husband is here too, and he concentrates on farming, although does some occasional gold panning in the dry season. We look forward to having our own land in the future, and to be good farmers.’

Such arrangements, as the following informant from Mvurwi explained, do not always work out, but land may be sought elsewhere; in this case on the wife's parent's resettlement farm:

'I met my husband in 2009, and married the following year. I joined my husband at Pembi Falls farm. It was tough staying with my in-laws. Sometimes I was denied food, and my freedom was limited. In 2012, I decided to go back to my parents' house, but at first my husband refused to come too. Later he came, and we built a home on my parents' land. I started a poultry project, with 200 birds. We managed to buy inputs and then had a very good tobacco crop. We then increased the number of birds, and my husband could pay *lobola* (bridewealth) to my parents.'

Generational dynamics, land and agrarian change

What, then, are the prospects for young people in a changing agrarian economy following land reform? What are the constraints on social reproduction and accumulation, and how is the transition to adulthood being navigated by this post-land reform generation?

A number of patterns emerge from the data. The notion of 'waithood' – an uncertain intermediate period, sometimes lasting for years – is key. This may involve precarious employment in different places, as well as helping out at parents' homes. Locations change during this period, but usually, following a period trying to make a living in the informal economy, many men return to their rural resettlement homes, especially after getting married and having children. With some exceptions, women move to their husband's home area on marriage. As many interviewees explained, it is easier to make a go of it at home, with the support of family, especially when there are children to look after. 'Waiting' affects reproductive careers too. On average, first children are born at the age of 19.8 among women and 23.2 among men⁸, and 39% of individuals in the sample have yet to have children.

With work in the wider economy risky, challenging and precarious, carving out options at home is a choice made by many. This is the only site where opportunities for accumulation exist (through land-based activities, sometimes linked to off-farm income-generating 'projects) and where social reproduction is possible, with the support of local networks and kin. As the case studies highlight, when people establish families, priorities change. The informal economy is difficult to navigate with a family involved, so, for those with children,

‘farming’ as a primary occupation approximately doubles, while being ‘self-employed’ nearly triples (mostly complemented with farming at home). At the same time, overseas work declines for this group. A male informant from Wondedzo explained how, after a period of highly precarious employment in South Africa and in mines across Zimbabwe, he came home:

‘Having realized the disaster ahead in my life [working in South Africa], I decided to go back home to do farming. In 2010 I got married and am now blessed with two children. I am now a full-time farmer doing market gardening alongside my father. I started with 0.1 ha, given by a relative, and I worked together with my father, in 2015 one ha was allocated by the village head, and I have a 5.5 HP pump, and can work independently. I grow cabbages, tomatoes and green mealies all year round and sell in Masvingo. I hire a motor car from one of the local farmers. I also have one hectare dryland plot, given by my father in 2011. I saw the possibilities of farming in South Africa [when employed as a farmworker]. There’s plenty of land, good soils and water here, but when you don’t irrigate, the crops get burned and fail.’

Contrary to many mainstream policy narratives and public commentary, farming as a livelihood is therefore important for young people in Zimbabwe. 47% of women in the cohort were farming (usually with parents, until they married and often moved) and 59% of men were farming, nearly all with allocations in parents’ plots. Land allocations usually move from sharing with parents to the allocation of 1-1.5 ha plot within the parents’ (sometimes grandparents’) A1 farm (a few inheriting the whole farm on the death of parents or grandparents). Informal markets in land are also common, with a few buying or renting land. Inheritance of land results in the sharing among brothers (and sometimes daughters); rarely is land handed only to eldest son as is ‘custom’, and a wider subdivision and sharing is seen.

With relatively large amounts of land in the post-land reform resettlement areas, those who benefited were often asked by other poorer relatives from the communal areas to take on children. This ‘magnet effect’, seen both in the 1980s resettlements and in the post-2000 setting (Deininger et al. 2004; Scoones et al 2010: 72), has resulted in both the supply of labour, but also a demand for land. The result is lots of subdivision across these A1 farms as the next generation makes claims, especially as many of those who acquired the land in 2000 are now passing on. The implications for land ownership and livelihoods of the next generation are only just now becoming apparent.

Our data therefore highlight fundamental challenges of both social reproduction and accumulation, constraining livelihood options and life courses. In the context of a crisis economy, there are few options for stable employment, and agricultural production is limited by access to land and finance. Even with a good education, as so many strive for, opportunities are limited. Land-based, agricultural livelihoods are an important alternative, where some opportunities for accumulation do exist. This requires entrepreneurship, improvisation and the deployment of new skills for production and marketing.

In the past, the route to becoming established as an independent adult was often marriage and getting a piece of land. Men would be allocated plots by a local traditional leader, while women would marry and move to their husband's area, farming on the plot. Today, the certainty of marriage or gaining land is not there. Many must just wait, existing in limbo, living with parents. They may invest effort in developing a 'project' on their parents' farm, doing piecework locally, or migrating elsewhere in search of often very temporary jobs.

The stress of the 'waithood' - not getting a job, not having land, not being able to set up an independent home, not being able to afford to marry (for men) or being pushed into early marriage (for women) - is a common theme across the cohort case studies. For many this is a challenge to self-esteem, to identity and personhood. Without recognition according to the norms of society (and the elder generation), a feeling of failure, generating stress, is apparent. Young men in particular frequently reflected, with a sense of shame, on their drink and drug habits.

In this setting, support networks become important, and beyond immediate family and kin networks, the new evangelical churches are especially significant. Embedded social relations therefore become key, not only for gaining access to assets (notably land), but also for moving on via marriage, as well as providing a sense of safety and support, improving wellbeing. But these are fragile too; not everyone is born into a family that can offer such help, and dependency on the older generation comes with its own costs.

Also, the emerging 'communities' in the resettlement areas are often riven with conflicts, as people came from different places and the sense of kin-based solidarity found in the communal areas is often not found (Murisa 2009). Those born in the resettlement areas, or who moved there when very young, do not have associations with the places that their parents

call ‘home’ in the communal areas. These new areas are ‘home’ for them, and often are quite challenging places in terms of community cohesion.

Many of today’s youth are part of what Bernstein (2006) refers to as the ‘fragmented classes of labour’, making a living on the margins, and across a wide diversity of livelihoods. Such livelihoods present real challenges for basic social reproduction. These are often not conditions that allow for an easy bringing up of a family. Stability in relationships are threatened, and children are often looked after by parents or other relatives in rural areas, as the domestic care economy is restructured. It is no surprise that many of informants argued that it was better to return home and farm, even if this meant just getting a small plot on their parents’ farm. This was seen by many as the best route to a better life

The main focus is starting an irrigation project, for maize and vegetables, combined with a tobacco plot for those in Mvurwi, and perhaps as poultry project. Across the 31 in-depth interviews, we saw a range of engagements with agriculture, across the value chain, involve both intensive production, but also running livestock projects, selling inputs at an agro-dealer shop, providing marketing services, and so on. Thus from small beginnings, usually with reliance on land from parents, young people can begin to accumulate, establishing homes and families from a rural, agrarian base, although this is far from easy.

Getting land independently though is more of a challenge. The resettlement areas are ‘full’, and getting new, larger plots requires close connections and reliance on patronage from local leaders, party officials and others. Most therefore rely on their parents’ land, clearing new areas, extending plots illegally into grazing land, or intensifying through digging wells, creating irrigation dams or buying pumps. Land inheritance in the resettlement areas is contested. Very often the expectation is that multiple sons, sometimes daughters, will inherit, causing family wrangles. As parents pass on, the next generation must enter caring relationships for surviving relatives living on the farm, adding further burdens to a stressed domestic economy.

The imagined futures of young people – becoming a professional, getting a formal-sector job or getting land for agriculture⁹ - are realised by few (around 15% have formal ‘jobs’ either in Zimbabwe or South Africa, with significantly more from Wondedzo). In part this is because the age group of our cohort have lived through the worst economic crisis in living memory, when the formal economy collapsed, the state ran out of resources, and the options for waged employment shrank to almost zero during periods of hyperinflation and cash shortages.

While Zimbabwe's economic crisis has had an extreme character, jobless growth, declining opportunities for employment by the state and austerity economics are features in richer, more stable economies too. Thus, even migration abroad to South Africa or the UK, for example, is no longer an option, despite it previously being a notable feature of life trajectories for many, especially from the late 1990s and early 2000s (Crush and Tevera 2010). For this generation, educated in the last 20 years, the premium of the post-Independence Zimbabwean education also no longer exists. While many scraped a few 'O-levels', the competition elsewhere is today much more intense, combined with the closing of borders and xenophobia elsewhere, including in South Africa.

Conclusion

Our results show, across both sites, how opportunities for young people following land reform are severely constrained. The precariousness of work, the challenges schooling and getting qualifications, family disputes and illnesses, the lack of land, the poor productivity of dryland farming, and the difficulties of establishing businesses without capital, are all recurrent themes. While a few have found their way into reasonably remunerated jobs, the routes to accumulation, and getting established as independent adults, are limited for others, with very small-scale irrigated farming seemingly by the far the best option.

Our findings show how a simple focus on 'youth' as a category is insufficient, as life chances are wrapped up in wider social, economic and political change. Land reform has restructured access to land and other resources, but also relationships across generations, and now some of these tensions are playing out. Contradicting some of the more pessimistic narratives around the role of young people in African agriculture, however, opportunities for accumulation and securing social reproduction lies in small-scale, intensive farming, usually combined with other 'projects' and off-farm work. This requires skill, improvisation and entrepreneurship, but for both men and women, such opportunities allow a move away from the uncertainties and anxieties of 'waithood'.

The context of Zimbabwe's economic crisis clearly influences these patterns, but it also highlights the need to go beyond the standard support mechanisms for young people, focused, for example, on training and skills transfer to get employment in assumed job market or small-scale enterprise development to create businesses for a stable, growing economic setting. Policy thinking instead needs to take account of the wider context of economic

transformation that has occurred in many economies, as the formal ‘job’ disappears, combined with a reflection on the implications of processes of agrarian transition, attending to issues of next-generation land access, land subdivision, agricultural investment and rural financing. These are all themes ignored by existing policy efforts, which assume a past that no longer exists. Policy support must also take more account of the very real stresses of life for young people today. Through our interviews, we sensed a loss of identity, confidence and esteem among many we talked to, with stress-related illness and destructive behaviours emerging, all affecting wellbeing.

The land reform of 2000 offered opportunities for many. A genuine, if as yet not fully realised, rural transformation is underway, especially in the A1 areas, as production increases, and investment and accumulation possibilities emerge. But how far will this be shared? Was this just a once-off redistribution, where limits to accumulation for the next generation are imposed, as land access becomes constrained, and a sluggish rural economy fails to generate jobs outside agriculture to absorb the next generation? Taking a cross-generational perspective on land reform is essential, we argue; rather than looking at a single moment of land transfer, the processes of longer-term agrarian transformation, affecting genders and generations differentially, have to be brought into view if some of the aspirations of young people are to be realised.

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Endnotes

¹ Zimbabwe's land reform from 2000 involved the transfer of around 8 million hectares, previously occupied by about 4,500 largely white-owned farms, initially to approximately 146,000 smallholder farms (designated A1) and around 16,000 medium-scale farms (designated A2) (Scoones et al. 2010); although the total allocations have increased since as earlier informal allocations have been approved, and others have been added. For on-going analysis and comment on Zimbabwe's land reform, including from these sites, see www.zimbabweland.wordpress.com. The special issue of which this is part provides further information on different aspects of the land reform 18 years on.

² A total of four individuals had died since birth.

³ See for example: AFDB 2016; Asciutti et al. 2016; AGRA 2015; FAO et al. 2014; Filmer and Fox 2014; AUC and UNECA 2013; Brooks et al 2013; World Bank 2006, and many others for recent policy commentaries.

⁴ For example for negative media narratives, see 'Zanu-PF youths threaten land demo' Newsday, 5 April 2016, <https://www.newsday.co.zw/2016/04/05/zanu-pf-youths-threaten-land-demo/>; 'Zim youths unemployed due to decreased capacity utilisation, Newsday, 18 April 2016, <https://www.newsday.co.zw/2016/04/18/zim-youths-unemployed-due-decreased-capacity-utilisation/>; 'Poverty, disasters forcing youths into prostitution and violent behaviours', Newsday, 26 October 2014, <https://www.newsday.co.zw/2014/10/26/poverty-disasters-forcing-youths-prostitution-violent-behaviours/> and for more positive ones, and for more positive ones, 'Embracing entrepreneurship to unleash Africa's economic growth, Newsday 18 April 2017, <https://www.newsday.co.zw/2017/04/18/embracing-entrepreneurship-unleash-africas-economic-growth/> 'Govt to promote indigenous foods', The Herald, 13 December 2016, <http://www.herald.co.zw/govt-to-promote-indigenous-foods/> (all accessed 8 October 2018).

⁵ 20 are in South Africa, while three are in Botswana.

⁶ One to Mozambique and one to South Africa.

⁷ While we do not have data for age at first marriage for Mvurwi, many commented on early marriage among women as a response to family debt created by a poor tobacco harvest and high costs of contracting, with *lobola* (bride price) payments being used to offset debt repayment. The national and provincial data from the 2015 Zimbabwe Demographic and Health Surveys show comparable patterns, with women (aged 20-35) in rural areas marrying at 18.8 years (median) and men (age 25-54) at 24.8 years (median). Median figures for Masvingo province were women marrying at 19.8 years and men at 25.7 years, while in Mashonaland Central, women married at 18.4 years and men at 24.6 years (ZIMSTATS and ICF International 2016: 70).

⁸ Median age at first birth for rural women is 19.6, and is slightly lower in Mashonaland Central (19.4) and higher in Masvingo (20.6), and increases with levels of education and wealth (ZIMSTATS and ICF International 2016: 92).

⁹ See the discussion of the Q-sort analysis undertaken with Francis Rwodzi here: <https://zimbabweland.wordpress.com/2017/11/06/what-next-for-young-people-in-land-reform-areas/> (accessed 8 October 2018).

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